

DIVERSE CREEDS

PAPAGO MUSIC

An important part of every Papago rite is song. The wine ceremony has its songs; so have the circle dances, the old village games, the *wi'ikisa* at Gu Achi. There are songs for curing diseases attributed to various animals. Other songs are sung by drunken men. Still others are used as lullabies. At all times the Papago love to sing—when they ride or work at home or in the fields, before they go to sleep, even when they waken in the night. Many of the songs came to the original singer in a dream, and most of them have a magic quality, whereby the singing will bring about some desired effect. 533

The songs express many different moods; they are humorous, wistful, daring, sad. They are full of metaphor, and the singer delights in obscure references. They are brief, understated, repetitious, but even when translated they carry a beauty that places them in the realm of true poetry. The music has distinctive rhythm and configuration.⁶

His songs mean much more to the Papago than poetry means to the average American. The songs are an integral and treasured part of the culture, and singers are respected persons. Perhaps with the new ways of life the songs will die out slowly; some people sing few of the old songs, and many of the ceremonies of which they were a part have gone.

The Papago love of music is also shown in the gusto with which they play and dance to modern Mexican and American songs at the fiestas. The youngsters delight in singing at school and spend their precious nickels in juke boxes in the trading posts. Even the Presbyterians, to whom the old songs are more or less forbidden, express their love of music in the singing of hymns. As often as possible the choir of one church will be invited to sing at another. For the Papago, singing is essential to living.

SONORA CATHOLICISM

In perhaps the majority of Papago villages there is a little adobe building with a rickety wooden cross over the door—the Sonora Catholic church. Sonora Catholicism antedates other Christian faiths on the Reservation today, for the belief and practice of Sonora Catholics are remnants of the teachings of the early Spanish missionaries, acquired either directly from the padres, or through other Indians or Mexicans. During the generations when no Catholic clergy came to Papagueria and the nearest priests were far away in Mexico, the faithful carried on as best they could the ceremonies and devotions of the church. 795 ●

6. For translations of many Papago songs, see Ruth Underhill, *Singing for Power*. Cheeky (op. cit.) gives some translations and records Papago music.

THE DESERT PEOPLE

- 795 With the absence of priests and the passage of time, much of the Roman creed and ritual vanished. In the Sonora Catholic churches, for example, there are no Mass, no hymns and prayers in Latin, no confession, and no marriage ceremony. Children are baptized by godparents, and the people bury their own dead.

In these little churches today the Papago sing and pray in Spanish to the Holy Family and to San Francisco Xavier, kneeling before the *santos* (sacred pictures and images) much as they do before the altars in their own homes. For church services people appointed by the villagers lead prayers, and a group of women ordinarily sing hymns; appointed committees of men plan the fiestas. On the whole, religious observances are fairly casual and individual. The Desert People like to manage their own affairs: the fact that their religion is largely self-conducted is one of its chief holds on the Sonora Catholic Papago and a major barrier to inclusion in the Roman Catholic church.

THE FIESTA⁷

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796 Near the church in almost every Papago village is a dance ground and close by is a large adobe or ocotillo building with an open kitchen called the "fiesta house." In and around this building, the church, and the dance ground take place the great religious and social events of the year—the fiestas. Sonora Catholics celebrate only a few ecclesiastical holidays: New Year's, Easter, the Finding of the Holy Cross (May 3), All Souls' Day (November 2), Christmas, and the feast days of San José (March 19), San Juan (June 24), and San Francisco (October 4). No one village observes all these holidays, but each has its own celebrations, usually two or three a year, which for convenience are often held on week ends rather than on the actual feast day. They are given, the people say, "to show that we still believe in our religion."

Sometimes a single family will give a "small fiesta," but the important occasions, the "big fiestas," are community projects. One man, usually a person of influence, or a committee of men, assumes leadership, and all the families co-operate in the preparations. Church and fiesta houses are swept, and blankets and rugs are placed on the floor. Benches are placed between posts marking the dance ground, and above are hung many-colored, crepe-paper streamers; sometimes the posts are even wrapped. The church is also brightened with streamers and paper flowers. Many other jobs must be done: wood is hauled for fires; food is collected; an orchestra is hired.

The fiesta usually begins in the afternoon or early evening with a procession, which forms just outside the church. If the village has a statue of the saint

7. Parts of this section are taken from Jane Cheeky, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 ff.

ARIZONA Labor Camps

517 of necessity, much
52 more reliance is placed by harvest hands on forms of amusement requiring a minimum of equipment and space: drinking, crap shooting, card playing, sexual indulgence.

797 Cotton pickers hauled from towns each day of course
521 had recreational resources of those population centers at their disposal. They could attend church on Sunday.
[563] Farmers make little effort to provide access to churches for their employees in labor camps. For some cotton pickers racial discrimination is a problem. As one Negro woman at Marana said, "There's a church over there, all right. But we don't know if they take colored. We don't go." For Catholic Papagos as Catholic Mexican-Americans, this is no problem. But farmers don't provide Sunday transportation to trading towns. The Desert People stay in labor camps on the Sabbath, except for a few from San Xavier who can take a bus home for the day occasionally.

527 About half the Papago women in the camps do some washing on Sunday.¹ An occasional individual picks some cotton, but most simply loaf around camp with nothing
[778] constructive to occupy them. Sonora Catholics make their household shrines in a corner of their cabins, and use
527 them. In labor camps where all residents are Papagos, or
346 where there are many of the Desert People in a large camp, they take over an empty cabin to furnish a chapel where they can hold their services.² One far-sighted farmer who understood his Papago employees built a fine chapel for them when he constructed a new concrete block camp, but such understanding is indeed rare. Labor camp chapels seem to serve a quarter of the Papago harvest hands.³

¹Based on information from 8 families.

²Sonora Catholicism antedates other Christian faiths on the Reservation today, for the belief and practice of Sonora Catholics are remnants of the teachings of the early Spanish missionaries, acquired either directly from the padres, or through other Indians or Mexicans. During the generations when no Catholic clergy came to Papagueria and the nearest priests were far away in Mexico, the faithful carried on as best they could the ceremonies and devotions of the church.

[778] "With the absence of priests and the passage of time, much of the Roman creed and ritual vanished. In the Sonora Catholic churches, for example, there are no Mass, no hymns and prayers in Latin, no confession, and no marriage ceremony. Children are baptized by godparents, and the people bury their own dead." Joseph, Spicer and Chesky, 1949, p. 81-82.

³Based on information from 8 families.

Immediate reasons Papagos work--

461 Aside from the necessity for earning enough cash
794 to buy food and clothing, there are other reasons for
796 earning money. During the picking season three im-
portant religious events occur. These are the feast
days of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis Xavier,
and All Souls Day of the Roman Catholic ceremonial
calendar. A very high proportion of the tribe goes to
one or another, or all three.

795 Although several denominations have gained a foot-
184 hold among the Desert People, the vast majority are
orthodox or Sonora Catholics. Harvest hands in 1950
were about 95% Catholic.¹ The rest are about evenly
divided between Protestants and individuals conscious-
ly rejecting Christian allegiance to practice native
forms of religion or none at all. The Presbyterian
church has the largest following among Protestant
groups, with six congregations on the reservation.
[797] There are other missions on the reservations. However,
missionary activity does not extend to labor camps.²

484 From the great reservoir of Papago Catholics come
788 the pilgrims to Magdalena, San Xavier, Chuwhiy Guwak
782 at fiesta time. These pilgrims make their journeys
755 primarily to keep promises they've made to the Saint,
796 or to ask him to intercede for them. Because they have
very deep faith in the powers of St. Francis to cure
illnesses, the Desert People frequently vow to the
Saint that if the petitioner or one of his loved ones
is cured, he will visit the statue of the Saint in the
Magdalena (or San Xavier or Chuwhiy Guwak) church.
Often the person vows to make four such visits, to
place a number of candles for the Saint, to leave him
an amount of money, perhaps even to walk from the
border to Magdalena or to perform some other penance.

78 Not all those petitioning the Saint seek health.
796 Some ask aid in business, love or other ventures. The
798 Desert People bring statues and pictures from their
household shrines and chapels to press against the
statue of the Saint for his blessing. They buy yards
of bright ribbons, sold in shops thrown up about the

¹Based on information from 35 individuals.

²Not 1 of 9 persons questioned had seen a missionary
in 1950. 1 had in a previous year.